

# **Minority Leader Robert Ward**

## *Biography*

During his nearly 20-year tenure as a legislator, Connecticut House Minority Leader Robert M. Ward, R-Northford, has built a reputation as an intelligent, honest, dedicated and compassionate leader.

Rep. Ward is currently serving in his fifth term as the legislature's House Minority Leader, making him the longest serving legislative leader in modern Connecticut history. Prior to his first election as Minority Leader in 1995, Rep. Ward also held the positions of Deputy Minority Leader (1993-94), Assistant House Minority Leader (1991-93), Chairman of the House Republican Bill Screening Committee, and the Ranking House Republican member of the General Assembly's Education Committee.

A lawyer by trade, Rep. Ward has a mind for detail and is considered an expert on the legislative process.

Rep. Ward is a respected fiscal conservative and an outstanding floor leader. When he addresses the state House of Representatives, he earns the attention of all lawmakers – Republicans and Democrats. In Connecticut Magazine, Rep. Ward was voted "Most Effective Legislator" by his peers from both sides of the aisle in 1994 and "Most Admired Legislator" and "Most Effective Legislator" in 1996. Although that publication has since stopped the practice of rating legislators, Rep. Ward still earns high marks for his professionalism and courtesy.

More recently, Rep. Ward became an outspoken advocate of transparency in state government. As caucus leader, Rep. Ward spearheaded a comprehensive initiative, titled "The Legislative Reform Agenda." This was a response to recent budget battles that, over the last several years, have increasingly been going behind closed doors and out of public view. Negotiations were taking place between only a few legislators instead of in front of appropriate legislative committees and the state's citizens.

"The Legislative Reform Agenda" not only calls for the budget to be negotiated in the open, but also outlined how other legislative actions should be revamped.

The reform plan calls for requiring that all legislators receive bills 72 hours prior to a vote so they have enough time to absorb what they are voting on, ask questions, and better serve their constituents. This would also give citizens time to absorb the details of these proposals and make their opinions known on them.

As a way to make the public more aware of legislation pending before the General Assembly, the "Legislative Reform Agenda" also suggests requiring legislative committee offices to have easily accessible e-mail addresses for the public to e-mail testimony. This would be one more way that government can hear the ideas and suggestions of the state's residents. The plan also calls for the experimentation with

interactive video technology to make public hearings accessible to taxpayers who cannot travel to the Capitol.

The “Legislative Reform Agenda,” has been overwhelmingly well received by the public and heralded by many newspaper editorials. The legislature’s Joint Committee on Legislative Management, which includes all legislative leaders from both sides of the aisle, is now considering the creation of a working group to enact improvements to the legislative process.

Thanks to the efforts of Rep. Ward, serious discussions about how to make government more accountable and accessible to the state’s citizens are underway.